

Blackfoot River (127 River Miles)

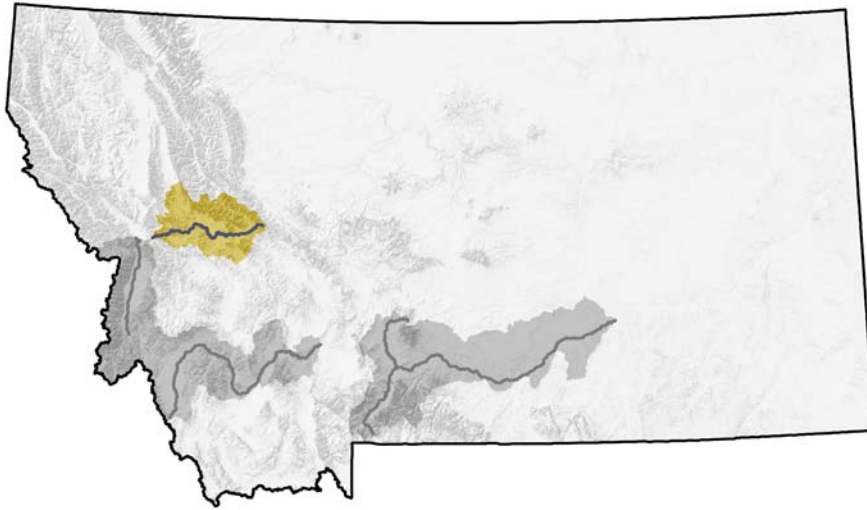


Figure 15. Blackfoot River Focus Area

The Blackfoot River begins at the junction of Beartrap and Anaconda creeks near the Continental Divide and flows west 132 miles to its mouth at Bonner, Montana. Near its headwaters, the Blackfoot River drops through glaciated high-alpine meadows and runs between steep, forested slopes. Above Lincoln, the river almost annually goes underground, then reappears below Lincoln and meanders through conifer forests and wetlands until it intersects with the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. For its remaining 52 miles, the Blackfoot levels out and moves through open ranch and timbered areas until it meets the Clark Fork River near Bonner. A free-flowing river, the Blackfoot is affected by the soon-to-be-removed Milltown Dam, which has blocked fish passage on the Clark Fork River since 1907.

Associated Habitats

Habitat Type	Habitat Tier	Acres	Miles
Intermountain Valley Rivers	II		127
Intermountain Valley Streams	II		316
Lowland Lakes	III	6,525	
Lowland Reservoirs	III	390	
Mountain Lakes	III	2,604	
Mountain Reservoirs	III	5	
Mountain Streams	I		3,207

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

There are a total of 23 aquatic species that are found within the Blackfoot River Focus Area. Tier I species are listed below. All associations can be found in Table 21.

Invertebrates: Western Pearlshell

Fish: Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout

Conservation Concerns & Strategies

Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies
Culverts, dams, irrigation diversions, and other instream barriers that fully or partially impede fish movement and reduce connectivity of habitat	Removal or modification of barriers in a manner that restores fish passage for fluvial native fish, including the Milltown Dam
Modification and degradation of stream channels caused by various construction or land management practices	Restoration of stream channels or streambanks to a condition that simulates their natural form and function
Riparian vegetation effected by range and forest management practices and streamside residential development (such activities destabilize streambanks, increase sediment inputs, reduced shading, and remove woody debris)	Support government and private conservation activities that encourage and support sustainable land management practices in riparian areas
	Modification of riparian management practices such that riparian vegetation is allowed to recover
	Develop statewide riparian best management principles
Entrainment of juvenile and adult fishes by irrigation diversions or other water intakes	Screening or modification of irrigation diversions or other water intakes in a manner that prevents entrainment of fishes

Unnatural hydrograph and water temperatures associated with the presence and operations of large dams, as well as blockage of migratory corridors (These alterations of the quantity or timing of stream flows cause unnatural flow fluctuations that diminish the quantity or quality of essential habitats	Implementation of various water conservation or flow management practices that restore essential habitats, simulate the natural hydrograph and also protect instream flows
Water chemistry problems that arise due to hard rock mines in headwaters	Implementation of a comprehensive mine cleanup in the headwaters of the Blackfoot River upstream of Lincoln, Montana